

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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O R 121700Z OCT 73
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1295
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USCINCEUR

S E C R E T ROME 11092

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS,IS
SUBJECT: SALE OF BLANKETS TO ISRAEL

REFS: A)ROME 10948; B) STATE 201481; C)ROME 11067

1. PRIOR TO ITALIAN DEMARCHE DISCUSSED IN REF C, WE HAD PLANNED ON EFFECTING BLANKET SALE TO ISRAELIS (REFS A AND B) WITHOUT CONSULTING ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. OUR HOPE WAS THAT TRANSACTION COULD HAVE BEEN CONSUMMATED WITHOUT BECOMING PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, BUT EVEN IF IT HAD WE WOULD HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO TAKE FLACK FROM GOI ARGUING THAT NO REQUIREMENT EXISTS FOR PRIOR CONSULTATIONS CONCERNING DISPOSITION OF NON-WARLIKE MATERIAL. REF C ALTERS SITUATION. WE HAVE DETERMINED THAT IN ALTERED CIRCUMSTANCES COMPLETING TRANSACTION WITH ISRAELIS WITHOUT GOI APPROVAL COULD HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR US-GOI RELATIONS. NOT ONLY WOULD EVENTUAL DISCLOSURE OF SALE DIRECTLY CONTRADICT POSITION ITALIANS HAVE TAKEN WITH SYRIANS, BUT ALSO TRADITIONAL ITALIAN HOSPITALITY FOR US ACTIVITIES IN ITALY WOULD BE PLACED IN JEOPARDY. IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT TRUCKLOADS OF MATERIAL MOVING TO PORT FROM US BASES WOULD BE PLAYED UP AS "MUNITIONS SHIPMENTS" BY HOSTILE PRESS DESPITE OUR DENIALS. FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE THIS RISK IS NOT WARRANTED BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

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2. WE ARE THEREFORE LEFT WITH THREE ALTERNATIVES WHICH ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE AT THIS JUNCTURE: (1) ASK GOI CONCURRENCE IN SALE OF BLANKETS FROM US DEPOTS WITHIN ITALY (WE HAVE INFORMALLY ASCERTAINED THAT 8,000 ARE AVAILABLE); (2) PURSUE SALE

ELSEWHERE WITH EUROPEAN COMMAND, E.G., GERMANY; OR
(3) SUGGEST ISRAELIS LOOK TO COMMERCIAL SOURCES EITHER IN
EUROPEA OR US FOR BLANKEST. WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD PURSUE FIRST
ALTERNATIVE SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE SECOND AND/OR THIRD. WE
DO NOT, HOWEVER, EXPECT AN EARLY GOI RESPONSE AND INDEED WOULD
NOT AT ALL BE SURPRISED BY A NEGATIVE RESPONSE (THE GOM IS EXTREMELY
SENSITIVE TO ANY ARAB CHARGE THAT IT IS AIDING ISRAEL). WE DO NOT
RPT NOT FORESEE THE GOI REACTING RAPIDLY ENOUGH SO AS TO HAVE THE
BLANKETS READY TO MEET THE ISRAELI SHIP SCHEDULED TO BE IN GENOA
ON OCTOBER 16-17. IF WASHINGTON FORESEES POSSIBILITIES IN SECUR-
ING THE BLANKETS ELSEWHERE WITHIN EUCOM, WE COULD PURSUE THIS
ALTERNATIVE CONCURRENTLY WITH ASKING THE ITALIANS. ALTERNATIVE
THREE WOULD BE EMPLOYED ONLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH NUMBER ONE OR
IN THE EVENT OTHER LOCATIONS RUN INTO THE SAME PROBLEMS AS WE
HAVE.

3. REQUEST WASHINGTON:

- (A) APPROVE OUR SEEKING CONCURRENCE OF ITALIAN GOVERNMENT
IN SALE (RECOGNIZING UNCERTAINTY OF SUCCESS);
- (B) CONSIDER OTHER MILITARY SOURCES OF BLANKETS WHICH WE WOULD
PASS ALONG TO ISRAELIS HERE (OR IN THEIR ABSENCE AUTHORIZE US TO
SUGGEST TO ISRAELIS THAT THEY CONSIDER COMMERCIAL SOURCES
PENDING GOI APPROVAL; AND
- (C) INSURE THAT USCINCEUR IS PROVIDED APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY
FROM DOD TO COMPLETE SALE WHETHER IN ITALY OR ELSEWHERE.

4. PLEASE ADVISE.
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